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Strategic review of the United Nations Peacekeeping Force in Cyprus

Report of the Secretary-General

I. Introduction

1. The present report is submitted pursuant to Security Council resolution 2369 (2017), in which the Council requested a strategic review of the United Nations Peacekeeping Force in Cyprus (UNFICYP) focused on findings and recommendations for how UNFICYP should be optimally configured to implement its existing mandate, based exclusively on a rigorous evidence-based assessment of the impact of UNFICYP activities.

2. In line with the request of the Security Council, the review focused on an assessment of the key functions, tasks, and activities of UNFICYP, and their respective impact. At the same time, the review assessed the Force's existing capacity and capabilities in an effort to ensure that it would be optimally configured to fulfil its mandated tasks.

II. Methodology

3. The strategic review was led by an external expert, Wolfgang Weisbrod-Weber, former Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Western Sahara. Mr. Weisbrod-Weber was supported by a review team consisting of representatives from the Departments of Peacekeeping Operations, Field Support, Political Affairs and Safety and Security of the Secretariat, as well as staff of UNFICYP.

4. The UNFICYP review process was conducted in three stages. First, consultations were undertaken, at both Headquarters and UNFICYP, with relevant stakeholders, including representatives of the Greek Cypriot and Turkish Cypriot communities and of the Member States concerned, on the proposed objectives, methodology and timeline of the strategic review. In parallel, the review team, with support from UNFICYP, conducted a desk review of relevant background documents aimed at identifying the Force's key functions, tasks and activities, and the capacities and capabilities available for their implementation.

5. During the second stage, a team led by Mr. Weisbrod-Weber travelled to Cyprus from 2 to 7 November 2017 to assess the impact of the activities performed by UNFICYP and develop recommendations on how the Force could be reconfigured in

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order to implement its mandated tasks more effectively and efficiently. To ensure a rigorous evidence-based assessment, the review team conducted extensive consultations with key interlocutors, including relevant authorities on both sides of the island, members of UNFICYP, the good offices mission of the Secretary-General and the United Nations country team in Cyprus, as well as the Commanders of the National Guard and the Turkish Cypriot security forces. Consultations were also conducted with members of the diplomatic community and civil society, and included a round-table discussion with women from across the island. The team also conducted field visits to all three sectors of the Force's area of operations. During the third and final stage, the report of the review team was assessed and evaluated by members of the Departments of Peacekeeping Operations, Field Services, Political Affairs and Safety and Security, who supplemented it with their comments and observations.

III. Background

6. UNFICYP was established by Security Council resolution 186 (1964), with a mandate to prevent a recurrence of fighting and, as necessary, to contribute to the maintenance and restoration of law and order and a return to normal conditions. While the mandate of the Force remains the same, its responsibilities evolved, following the hostilities of 1974, to include supervising the ceasefire lines, maintaining a buffer zone and facilitating intercommunal contacts.

7. The Security Council, in its resolution 1568 (2004), approved the amended concept of operations and force level of UNFICYP outlined in the report of the Secretary-General on the United Nations operation in Cyprus dated 24 September 2004 (S/2004/756). That led to an authorized strength of 860 troops, including up to 40 military observers and liaison officers, and 69 police officers. Subsequently, the Security Council, in its resolution 2263 (2016), decided to increase the Force's force level from 860 to 888. The increase was authorized in response to a recommendation in the report of the Secretary-General on the United Nations operation in Cyprus dated 6 January 2016 (S/2016/11) that was based on enhanced planning efforts in UNFICYP in anticipation of a possible settlement agreement and the opening of two new crossing points. In addition to its military and police components, UNFICYP comprises a civil affairs component as well as mission support elements.

Current situation

8. During its visit to Cyprus, the review team found that the situation in the UNFICYP area of operations remains calm. The number and type of military incidents have been relatively constant over the past 10 years, and no violent military incident has been reported since 1996. Nevertheless, challenges remain that have the potential to escalate tensions, negatively affect a resumption of the talks and contribute to a further deterioration in the relationship between the sides. Among those challenges is the continued positioning of the opposing forces (i.e., the Greek Cypriot National Guard and the Turkish forces and Turkish Cypriot security forces) along respective ceasefire lines, in some cases divided by only a few metres.

9. Between 1 January and 31 October 2017, 167 military violations of the status quo were recorded in the buffer zone, as were another 147 violations of the maritime security line, usually in the form of overmanning, construction violations involving the building or improving of positions along the ceasefire lines and the forward movement of troops into the buffer zone. That represents an increase in violations, including those of the maritime security line, of 5 per cent compared with 2016, and a decrease of 5 per cent compared with 2007, reflecting a relatively constant level and severity of military incidents. Despite the relative calm, more than a thousand armed

soldiers deployed along the ceasefire lines on either side of the buffer zone face each other every day, and thousands more are scattered across the island. Cases of ill-discipline, consisting mostly of provocations along the ceasefire lines, occur frequently, as do occasional military training exercises close to the ceasefire lines, including the movement of armoured vehicles and heavy weapons. There has also been no genuine effort by the sides to resolve the long-standing military violations as described in my regular reports on UNFICYP.

10. That being said, the review team found that tensions in the buffer zone mainly relate to civilian activity. UNFICYP now records far higher numbers of civilian incidents than military violations: on average, 3,180 civilian incidents each year have been recorded in the past decade, representing 85 per cent of all unauthorized activities recorded by UNFICYP. Since the demining of the buffer zone and the opening of crossings between the northern and southern parts of the island in 2003, large numbers of Cypriots have sought to use land in the buffer zone for farming or other purposes. UNFICYP estimates that a high proportion of arable land in the buffer zone is currently cultivated by members of both communities, and about 20 per cent of that land is being farmed without the authorization of their owners. Even land closest to the positions of the Turkish forces, where, for security reasons, UNFICYP has consistently discouraged civilian activities, is now farmed.

11. As Cypriots seek to protect their rights to farm their land in the buffer zone, tensions often arise between communities, between civilian authorities and potentially with the opposing forces. For example, UNFICYP has received 43 applications to farm 117 plots of land in the Potamia and Pyroi area that are already being farmed by others. A similar situation emerged in Katokopia, where Greek Cypriots filed applications for permits to farm their land within 200 metres of the Turkish forces ceasefire line.

12. As the only bicommunal village in the buffer zone, Pyla creates numerous opportunities for tension, ranging from unauthorized casinos to drug trafficking and other serious crimes. The review team found that while the Turkish Cypriot police deal with criminal activities involving Turkish Cypriots and the Cyprus police deal with those involving Greek Cypriots, most criminal activities and other incidents and tensions are intercommunal, requiring the intervention and support of UNFICYP police to resolve any ensuing conflicts.

13. Civilian demonstrations, though mostly peaceful, may nevertheless turn violent, including when activists attempt to provoke reactions from the other side. Most recently, in July 2017, nationalist demonstrators from both sides faced each other at the Ledra Street crossing point in Nicosia, with those in the south burning flags, throwing projectiles and beginning to dismantle the fences that restrict access to the buffer zone. Timely liaison with the Force and the visible presence of UNFICYP military forces ensured that the situation was brought under control by the Cyprus police.

14. With regard to the negotiations towards a settlement, the two sides remain in a "period of reflection". While the review team focused on its assigned task, that is, the review of UNFICYP, interlocutors on both sides of the island took the opportunity to note that talks could resume at an appropriate time after the upcoming 2018 elections and under appropriate circumstances. The current status of the talks inevitably creates opportunities for the hardening of positions and mistrust, making it all the more important for UNFICYP to maintain stability and help create conditions conducive to a political settlement.

IV. Activities of the United Nations Peacekeeping Force in Cyprus

15. Against that backdrop, the UNFICYP civilian, military and police components undertake various activities to execute its mandate: to prevent a recurrence of fighting and contribute to maintaining law and order in the buffer zone and a return to normal conditions. Those activities revolve around the concepts of deterrence, prevention and the resolution of conflicts through close liaison and direct engagement. While deterrence and prevention fall mainly, but not exclusively, within the remit of the UNFICYP military component, the resolution of conflicts through liaison and engagement is carried out by all components. In fact, liaison by all components and at all levels has become the primary tool for UNFICYP to resolve potentially confrontational situations and defuse tensions.

16. In view of the above, the review team found that, in order to increase its effectiveness, the capacity of UNFICYP for liaison and engagement should be strengthened without, for the time being, weakening its preventive and deterrent capability. That change in focus could be achieved by redirecting resources within the Force and by eliminating some redundancies and military support functions, which at the same time could result in some gains in efficiency.

Civilian component

17. The Office of my Special Representative and Head of UNFICYP provides oversight and coordination of the activities of all mission components, ensuring an integrated approach to all aspects of the Force's work. The Office also leads the Force's planning efforts. During the past two years, in coordination with the Departments of Peacekeeping Operations, Field Services and Political Affairs, it developed comprehensive plans for United Nations support to the implementation of a settlement in Cyprus.

18. With support from the Senior Adviser and the single UNFICYP Political Affairs Officer, my Special Representative engages regularly with both sides to address issues related to UNFICYP that have escalated to the leadership level. The Senior Adviser and the civil affairs component facilitate the work of a number of technical committees, which are bicommunal mechanisms established by the two sides in the negotiations to address issues affecting the daily lives of Cypriots from both communities. Specifically, facilitation is provided to the work of the technical committees with regard to crossings, cultural heritage, the environment, health and humanitarian matters as well as, with the support of UNFICYP police, the Technical Committee on Crime and Criminal Matters (see para. 47). With the support of the UNFICYP military component, facilitation is also provided to the work of the Technical Committee on Crisis Management, and the Force's support component assists the work of the Technical Committee on Broadcasting. The technical committees are important in their own right, but are also a significant example of how the two sides, with support from UNFICYP, can find ways to come together directly to address issues of mutual concern.

19. The review team found that the political liaison function of UNFICYP has become increasingly important in recent years, including as a result of the increased civilian activity in the buffer zone. However, UNFICYP has no dedicated political office and relies, to a great extent, on the Office of my Special Adviser on Cyprus for its political analysis. In order to improve mutual cooperation between the two entities, the review team recommends that a mechanism be developed that includes more regular and structured interaction, meetings and information-sharing. That would also ensure a common approach by UNFICYP and the Office of my Special Adviser in

their support to some of the technical committees, thereby rendering such support more effective.

Civil affairs

20. The UNFICYP civil affairs component supports the implementation of the Force's mandate to contribute to a return to normal conditions, working in close cooperation with the Force's military and police components. In that respect, the activities of the component are organized around three interrelated areas of work: the management of civilian activities in the buffer zone, the provision of support to intercommunal trust-building initiatives and the facilitation of the delivery of humanitarian aid to the Greek Cypriot and Maronite communities living in the north and support to Turkish Cypriots living in the south.

21. In 2014, to manage civilian activities in the buffer zone, UNFICYP established an integrated office in each sector, known as a Sector Civilian Activity Integrated Office, coordinated by one national Civil Affairs Officer and including two police and two military personnel. The offices engage not only with local communities and authorities, law enforcement agencies and the opposing forces, but also with individual Cypriots, such as farmers and landowners, to ensure that civilian activities in the buffer zone do not disrupt stability and security. An important factor in those efforts is a system of permits that dates back to the 1970s. Under that system, farmers receive permits from UNFICYP authorizing the use of land in the buffer zone whenever it does not interfere with security or law and order concerns. UNFICYP military and police patrols monitor compliance with the permit system.

22. The review team found that the UNFICYP permit system is labour-intensive and suffers from various shortcomings, including limited support from the authorities. UNFICYP does not have access to cadastral records in a form that allows it to confirm title deeds presented by individuals applying for permits, and lacks the means to enforce compliance without the intervention of the relevant local law enforcement agencies. In the absence of formal endorsement by the authorities, many in the buffer zone do not feel compelled to comply with UNFICYP requirements. UNFICYP estimated that the level of compliance at present is around 40 per cent of all civilian activities in the buffer zone. During the visit of the review team, UNFICYP received assurances, at the highest political level of the Government of Cyprus, that its authority to regulate civilian activities in the buffer zone is recognized. The officials also committed to support the Force's efforts to ensure that the permit system works effectively and that the authority of UNFICYP to manage civilian activity in the buffer zone is respected.

23. The review team took note that the considerable increase in civilian activity in the buffer zone has led to a rise in civilian disputes that have the potential to cause tensions. As a result, the review team found that UNFICYP plays an increasingly important role, liaising and engaging with local counterparts in an effort to resolve actual and emerging conflicts. To enable the Force to perform that role more effectively, the review team recommends that each Sector Civilian Activity Integrated Office be headed by one international Civil Affairs Officer, to be redeployed from UNFICYP headquarters. That would raise the profile of the integrated offices, strengthen their capacity in the sectors to mediate civilian disputes through community engagement and provide continuity with regard to engagement, including better outreach to women in the communities, which is critical to gaining the trust of interlocutors.

24. The UNFICYP civil affairs component also promotes intercommunal initiatives, working as a "connector and convener" among civil society actors and local community representatives. In addition, it supports the efforts of the diplomatic

community, including the Religious Track of the Cyprus Peace Process, under the auspices of the Embassy of Sweden, and the Embassy of Slovakia, which brings together political parties for regular discussions. Recognizing that for several decades intercommunal initiatives were largely focused on a small group of activists in Nicosia, the civil affairs component has sought to strengthen cooperation between actors in Nicosia and other areas such as Limassol, Kyrenia, Famagusta and Deryneia/Derynia. The proposed redeployment of one international civilian staff member to each sector, as described above, would also help to strengthen ongoing efforts to promote intercommunal initiatives, including for women, beyond Nicosia.

25. The review team found that, as at the date of reporting, interactions between the two communities remain scarce: while 3 million people crossed the green line in 2006, less than half that number crossed in 2016, with the majority of the crossings likely attributable to Turkish Cypriots living in the north. Civil society actors involved in promoting a culture of peace in Cyprus enjoy little political space or institutional support. Against that backdrop, most interlocutors met by the review team stressed that the modest role played by UNFICYP in support of intercommunal trust- and confidence-building has a significant impact. The review team therefore recommends that UNFICYP continue to facilitate intercommunal events, including small gatherings to promote contact between Greek Cypriot and Turkish Cypriot organizations, and assist with larger cultural events where communities can mix freely. In their interaction with the review team, women's organizations from both sides called for, in particular, specific events and "safe spaces" to meet as part of community-building.

26. The civil affairs component also assists Greek Cypriots with their appeals to the Turkish Cypriot authorities to attend services at religious sites in the north, and facilitates crossings of Turkish Cypriots for pilgrimages and commemorations in the south. In 2016, the Force received 139 such requests for services in the north, of which 84 were approved; it also facilitated three major pilgrimages from the north to the Hala Sultan Tekke mosque in the south. The pattern of approvals by the Turkish Cypriot authorities has been uneven, and many of the successful attempts to gain permission involved repeated UNFICYP intervention. While freedom of worship is the primary impact of the Force's facilitation of requests for religious services, Greek Cypriot services that are held in villages with Turkish Cypriot residents also provide an opportunity for interaction between both communities.

27. Pursuant to the Third Vienna Agreement of August 1975 between the leaders of the two communities at the time, the UNFICYP civil affairs component, with support from UNFICYP police, has facilitated deliveries of humanitarian supplies and conducted visits to Greek Cypriots and Maronites living in the north, and visited Turkish Cypriots in the south. Further to the decision by the Turkish Cypriot authorities to impose customs duties on non-medical items in the humanitarian delivery package, implemented as at 1 October 2017, UNFICYP no longer delivers food and non-food items, although it continues to deliver medical supplies and conduct home visits. In the coming period, UNFICYP will continue to work with communities and authorities to ensure that sustainable ways are found to provide for the social welfare, health and educational needs of Greek Cypriots and Maronites living in the north, and Turkish Cypriots in the south.

28. As at 9 November 2017, the gender balance in the international civilian component of UNFICYP was 5 men (28 per cent) and 13 women (72 per cent) in the substantive units, and 13 men (76 per cent) and 4 women (24 per cent) in the support and security functions. There are therefore 35 international staff in UNFICYP, of which 17 are women (48 per cent), and 115 national staff, of which 45 are women (39 per cent).

Military component

29. The UNFICYP military component, commanded by a Force Commander at the rank of Major General, comprises 888 troops, including a Force headquarters of 60 multinational staff officers and soldiers; three sectors, each commanded by a Lieutenant Colonel; and Force troops consisting of a Mobile Force Reserve, a military police unit, engineers and a military aviation unit. The Force maintains 5 camps, 10 permanent observation posts and 3 patrol bases.

30. Of the authorized military strength of 888 personnel, 28 positions were established under Security Council resolution 2263 (2016) to support military planning efforts in anticipation of a possible settlement. With planning for a settlement no longer requiring extensive Force resources, the review team recommends that 20 of those positions be repatriated. The remaining eight positions would need to be retained for monitoring requirements at the Deryneia/Derynia and Lefka-Aplici/Lefke-Apliç crossing points, which are expected to be opened in the coming months.

31. The UNFICYP military component employs a combination of static observation posts and mobile patrols. Mobile patrols along the 180-kilometre buffer zone are conducted on foot, in vehicles and by helicopter, and are coordinated and supported by the Force headquarters and troops. The review team found that the daily patrols conducted by the Force, including jointly with UNFICYP police, have a significant preventive effect. The review team therefore recommends that patrolling should continue in all sectors at current levels. At the same time, by eliminating some redundancies and optimizing joint patrolling by the UNFICYP military and police components, 25 positions from the Force across the three sectors can be saved, 10 of which could be used to strengthen the military observation and liaison structure (see para. 39), and the other 15 repatriated. The proposed limited reduction does not affect the current operational tempo, nor the flexibility to constitute a modest sector-level reserve force if required.

32. In 2008, to support its patrolling, UNFICYP installed six closed-circuit television cameras in the Nicosia area of the buffer zone, becoming the first United Nations peacekeeping operation to use 24-hour camera surveillance to monitor a conflict area. The cameras serve as an important preventive and observation tool, including for collecting and preserving evidence. Therefore, the review team recommends that, with due consideration to local sensitivities and regulations, UNFICYP take a phased, low-profile, low-cost and high-impact approach to adopting new technologies, with the first phases dedicated to improving and augmenting the current system in the Nicosia area of the buffer zone, including night-vision capabilities. The Force should then explore ways to leverage technology to increase its effectiveness in monitoring other sensitive areas of the buffer zone, focusing on emerging technologies such as movement sensors and possibly micro-unmanned aerial systems.

33. The UNFICYP Mobile Force Reserve is an important deterrent, and in fact the only one that the Force has at its disposal, including for deployment during large-scale civilian activities, such as demonstrations in or near the buffer zone. It comprises a headquarters element, three platoons and a protected mobility element of nine armoured personnel vehicles. The platoons are trained and have a military public order management capability to use within the buffer zone, as determined by the Force Commander. The Reserve maintains one platoon to move on short notice at all times and has the capacity to rapidly deploy a second platoon. The third platoon carries out security duties at the United Nations Protected Area and fulfils other security requirements as required. At present the three platoons rotate between the Reserve and security functions.

34. In order to enhance effectiveness, the review team recommends that the Mobile Force Reserve be reconfigured as two dedicated and fully resourced platoons focused solely on the mobile reserve functions, together with the required small headquarters and support element. It is recommended that the newly reconfigured Reserve be provided by a single troop-contributing country to ensure consistent training and procedures as well as effective command and control. The third platoon should be specifically dedicated to conducting security tasks in the United Nations Protected Area. The review team is of the opinion that this solution provides an enhanced and cost-effective security solution compared to any civilian contract option.

35. The complex nature of the environment throughout the buffer zone, especially within the fragile urban environment of Nicosia, demands a mobility solution for the Mobile Force Reserve that provides a balance between protection and agility. The review team found that the present armoured personnel carriers are no longer suitable; they have not been used in operations for many years. A more appropriate and operationally effective mobility solution would be a mixed fleet of troop-carrying trucks and armoured vehicles that could be used to match the circumstances associated with any deployment. The review team therefore recommends that the nine armoured personnel carriers and associated weaponry be repatriated, together with the 11 military personnel presently used to man them. Instead, a mixed fleet of troop-carrying trucks and armoured vehicles, as described above, should be established to support the requirements of the Reserve. In that way, the effectiveness of the Reserve would be increased while at the same time efficiencies could be achieved.

36. The review team found that the aviation capability in UNFICYP provides an important capability that ensures the Force's ability to perform mandated tasks. Specifically, the UNFICYP aviation unit enables the Force to identify violations by air in both sensitive areas and areas that are inaccessible owing to the terrain. It therefore enhances the preventive function of UNFICYP patrols. The aviation unit also provides a limited but critical capacity for air-based casualty evacuation as well as a way to deploy force elements rapidly across the buffer zone. In that way, the deterrent function of UNFICYP is strengthened. In addition, the aviation unit serves to reaffirm the presence of UNFICYP within the buffer zone. The review team therefore recommends that the aviation unit be retained.

37. The UNFICYP military component also includes a military observer and liaison structure of 36 officers dedicated to conducting continual liaison with military counterparts on both sides of the island. That includes two Majors, who serve as dedicated liaison officers with the headquarters of the respective opposing forces. Each sector also has a dedicated liaison structure for engagement at the sector level. At the command level, the Force Commander liaises with the Commanders of the opposing forces and the UNFICYP Chief of Staff with his respective counterparts in the opposing forces.

38. The review team found that the UNFICYP military observer and liaison structure plays a critical role in de-escalating incidents that occur along the buffer zone, through effective liaison with the opposing forces and community engagement within each Sector Civilian Activity Integrated Office. The review team therefore recommends that the strength of the military observer and liaison group be increased to 46 unarmed officers to enhance interaction and liaison with counterparts in the opposing forces as well as community engagement within the UNFICYP integrated offices structure.

39. The proposed increase would include an additional Deputy Chief of Staff/Chief Liaison Officer position at Force headquarters to ensure better command and control arrangements for the military observer and liaison group. The Deputy Chief of Staff/Chief Liaison Officer, to be deployed for two years to ensure continuity, would

oversee the enhanced military observer and liaison structure at the sector level, which would be augmented by three additional officers per sector, each responsible for liaison with the National Guard, the Turkish forces/Turkish Cypriot security forces and within each sector-level integrated office, respectively. To ensure continuity in the engagement with their counterparts, those additional nine positions would have a tour of duty of at least 12 months, unlike the usual 6-month rotation period of some of the contingents in the sectors. The proposed increase in the strength of the military observer and liaison group would be achieved from within existing resources, using posts freed up by the limited reconfiguration of the military component as described in paragraph 31. It would therefore increase effectiveness without a loss in efficiency.

40. The Ledra Palace Hotel, located in sector 2 near the Green Line in Nicosia, is utilized as the sector 2 headquarters and as operational centres for the UNFICYP civil affairs and police components. In addition, the hotel presently serves as accommodation for 195 UNFICYP military personnel. Using the upper floor of that ageing building has been deemed unsafe owing to fire hazards, and would require major renovation of its core infrastructure. Responsibility for that significant investment rests with the host nation under the terms of the status-of-forces agreement, but little progress has been made to date. It has therefore become imperative to relocate the troops, while continuing daily operations from the ground floor of the hotel. The ground floor would also continue to be used for intercommunal events and other functions.

41. The review team identified the United Nations Protected Area as the preferred site for the relocation of the accommodation for the military personnel from the Ledra Palace Hotel. Co-location with other UNFICYP personnel in the United Nations Protected Area offers opportunities to repatriate 22 military support personnel. In addition, the review team identified, in sector 1 and at four camp locations, 18 military support positions that can be repatriated.

42. The UNFICYP military component also contributes to demining activities by assisting with the coordination and prioritization of demining tasks and liaising with the opposing forces on demining issues. The review team found, however, that conditions for the demining of the four remaining minefields in the buffer zone are not currently in place. It therefore recommends that, within UNFICYP, only the personnel of the United Nations Mine Action Service continue to focus on mine action, in order to preserve the gains made to date and identify opportunities for future engagement.

43. The UNFICYP military component currently has a women's participation rate of approximately 6 per cent. The review team recommends that efforts be undertaken vis-à-vis troop-contributing countries to achieve a rate of 15 per cent participation of women in the military component of UNFICYP within the next 18 months. An increase in uniformed women would, inter alia, assist in the Force's community engagement with local women.

Police component

44. The UNFICYP police component is headed by a Senior Police Adviser and comprises 69 police officers and 1 civilian support staff member. Ten UNFICYP police officers are currently deployed at Force headquarters; the remaining 59 are deployed at eight locations in the buffer zone. Eighteen police officers are deployed in sector 1, 15 in sector 2 and 26 in sector 4. That includes between five and seven officers with command responsibilities in each sector. The UNFICYP police component has the highest ratio of women police officers in any United Nations peacekeeping operation: 29, or 42 per cent, of the 69 police officers are women, including the Senior Police Adviser.

45. UNFICYP police conduct daily patrols and hold meetings with local community leaders and representatives in order to contribute to the maintenance of law and order in the buffer zone. On average, UNFICYP police conduct more than 8,000 patrols a year, including joint patrols with the military in order to monitor the situation and mediate incidents that have the potential to raise tensions between the opposing forces, between civilians and between the military and civilians. In addition, three UNFICYP police officers are assigned to the Civilian Activity Integrated Office at Force headquarters, and two are assigned to each of the three Sector Civilian Activity Integrated Offices. As part of that integrated structure, UNFICYP police officers engage primarily with the police authorities on both sides of the island to help regulate civilian activities in the buffer zone and resolve disputes. Over the past six years, UNFICYP police have handled an average of 3,000 incidents in the buffer zone a year, the majority of which have occurred in sectors 1 and 4. The review team recommends that additional UNFICYP police officers be deployed to the sectors for patrolling and liaison by reducing police personnel at both Force and sector headquarters. Among the additional police officers to be deployed to the sectors, two should be assigned to each Sector Civilian Activity Integrated Office. The second of those officers could also, time permitting, be available to conduct joint patrols with the military in order to maximize impact within the limited resources available, thereby increasing the effectiveness and impact of UNFICYP activities in the sectors.

46. In Pyla, the only bicommunal village in the buffer zone, UNFICYP police directly support the maintenance of law and order by the two sides. While Cyprus police and Turkish Cypriot police are allowed in the village, they are not authorized to carry weapons or wear their uniforms, their vehicles are required to be unmarked and they are not permitted to establish a permanent police station in the village. In view of those restrictions, UNFICYP police, who operate the only police station in the village, escort and facilitate investigations and operations by the Cyprus police and Turkish Cypriot police, who handle cases related to the Greek Cypriot and the Turkish Cypriot communities in Pyla, respectively. Since Pyla has reportedly seen a significant rise in criminal activity over the past years, UNFICYP police address an increasing number of issues affecting both communities, in consultation with the two *mukhtars* of Pyla who represent the two communities. The review team found that the liaison role of UNFICYP police vis-à-vis the Cyprus police and Turkish Cypriot police in Pyla is essential, owing to the absence of direct contact between them. The presence of UNFICYP police in Pyla, together with UNFICYP military and civil affairs officers, has significantly contributed to reducing tensions and resolving disputes on various issues.

47. UNFICYP police also provide impartial liaison between the Cyprus police and the Turkish Cypriot police in order to assist in the development of anti-crime strategies and to facilitate the investigation of crimes and criminal matters inside and across the buffer zone. In that regard, UNFICYP continues to facilitate the work of the Joint Communications Room, which allows for information to be shared on crimes, criminal matters and humanitarian cases, in parallel with its parent body, the Technical Committee on Crime and Criminal Matters. The Joint Communications Room consists of two members from each side who work in the same office, located in the buffer zone near the Ayios Dometios/Metehan crossing point in Nicosia, every day. The review team found that the Joint Communications Room, which is supported by two UNFICYP police officers, is a unique example of cooperation between the two sides, who, within that framework, exchange information covering a wide range of criminal matters. The rapid increase in the number of exchanges of information and requests handled by the Joint Communications Room since its establishment (from 88 in 2009 to 265 as at the time of reporting), and the fact that close to 50 per cent of the requests originate from each side, suggest that bicommunal structures have

the potential to work effectively and to flourish, with support from UNFICYP and the goodwill of the sides.

Force coordination and support

48. Structured and regular coordination of the activities of UNFICYP across all components presently takes place only within the Sector Civilian Activity Integrated Offices and at Force headquarters. The flow of information within the components comes together in a formal way only at the level of my Special Representative. The review team found that this was already insufficient and would become even more so if and when the new structure, providing for enhanced liaison across all components and at all levels, was implemented. The review team, therefore, recommends the establishment of a Joint Operations Centre and a Joint Mission Analysis Centre, as is the case in other missions. As in other multicomponent missions, the Joint Operations Centre would provide integrated situational awareness and facilitate operational activities undertaken by individual mission components. The Joint Mission Analysis Centre would provide integrated analysis based, inter alia, on information collected from all components, including through standard and ad hoc strategic reports. The Joint Operations Centre would ensure effective information-sharing among all mission components and other relevant stakeholders, while the Joint Mission Analysis Centre would provide multisource integrated analysis and predictive assessments for the benefit of the Force's senior management. The review team finds that a Joint Operations Centre and a Joint Mission Analysis Centre would be indispensable in view of the proposed new emphasis on liaison and community engagement, and would, to some extent, make up for the lack of a full-fledged political office in UNFICYP. The review team is of the opinion that UNFICYP should be able to create at least a Joint Operations Centre-like structure from existing resources, but sees a need for an additional senior civilian staff member to head the Joint Mission Analysis Centre.

49. Owing to its lengthy existence and largely predictable operational tempo and workload, the Force has been subjected to consistent budget and staffing reductions over recent years, which have mainly affected its support component. To a large extent, the Force has been able to absorb those reductions, but its ability to react to unforeseen requirements or unprogrammed activities, including full implementation of major change initiatives, has been seriously curtailed. In addition, risks have been identified in relation to resource management and compliance owing to limited international support staff. Reductions in uniformed personnel should therefore not be linked directly to commensurate reductions in operational and staffing requirements, particularly since the proposed reductions to the strength of the Force mostly affect military support personnel.

V. Observations and recommendations

50. The review team, on the basis of the documentation provided and the evidence obtained during the review process, including through exchanges with UNFICYP staff as well as with relevant stakeholders, found that UNFICYP operates in an environment characterized by constant but contained military incidents along the ceasefire lines, combined with a vastly increased level of civilian activity in the buffer zone.

51. Most interlocutors with whom the review team engaged attributed the containment of military incidents to the preventive and deterrent role of UNFICYP. The ability of UNFICYP to resolve any such incidents quickly and prevent them from escalating was especially valued, as the two sides have no direct contact with each

other and rely on the Force to clear up misunderstandings and pass on messages. I therefore concur with the recommendation of the review team that the preventive and deterrent role of UNFICYP should be maintained for the time being. While the actual impact of such a role is very difficult to ascertain, the risk associated with any drastic reduction of the Force is not justified under the present circumstances. That being said, I note that the review team has identified an opportunity for a limited reduction in the military strength of the Force, mainly with respect to the military support elements. In line with the findings of the review team as detailed in the present report, I therefore recommend that the actual military strength of UNFICYP be reduced to 802 troops. That need not be reflected in a reduction of the authorized strength; in fact, as the additional troops authorized by the Security Council in its resolution 2263 (2016) would be repatriated or redeployed within UNFICYP, if the authorized strength were to remain at 860, it would allow some flexibility to increase deployment should the need arise, for example in support of eventually resumed settlement talks.

52. The vastly increased level of civilian activity in the buffer zone has already led to an increase in situations with potentially serious security implications, for example when Cypriots farm land in the buffer zone that they do not own or rent from others, especially if the actual owners are from the other community, or when farming takes place too close to the ceasefire line of the Turkish forces. The work of UNFICYP to resolve such situations is valuable and de facto recognized as such by the two sides, but hindered by challenges to the Force's authority in the buffer zone.

53. The main method for UNFICYP to resolve incidents, whether military or civilian, and situations with a potential to become incidents, is through liaison and early engagement with the two sides. Since incidents in the buffer zone have increased and are likely to continue to do so in the future, I support the review team's recommendation that the UNFICYP capability for liaison and engagement be strengthened across all components to maintain stability and calm, thereby contributing effectively to conditions conducive to a resumption of settlement talks. Liaison is already viewed by UNFICYP as a cross-component task, as it is carried out by the civilian, police and military components of the Force. I concur with the review team that liaison and engagement could be strengthened quantitatively by devoting more human resources to that task, and qualitatively by redeploying resources from Force headquarters to the sectors, tightening oversight and better coordinating the efforts of the different components.

54. Specifically, accomplishing those recommendations would entail: transferring international Civil Affairs Officers to the sectors to head the existing Sector Civilian Activity Integrated Offices and increase its police and military staffing; making more UNFICYP police officers available for patrolling, liaison and engagement tasks in the sectors by thinning out headquarters staffing, while preserving intact the present valuable UNFICYP police engagement in the Joint Communications Room and in Pyla; and expanding the existing military observer and liaison structure and providing it with greater oversight and continuity. I also concur with the review team that the quantitatively and qualitatively strengthened liaison and engagement capability of UNFICYP, which involves all mission components at the headquarters and Sector level, needs to be coordinated by a single integrated structure. I therefore support the recommendation to establish a Joint Operations Centre and a Joint Mission Analysis Centre in UNFICYP, and one additional senior civilian staff post for a Joint Mission Analysis Centre, which would also help address the gap in political analysis resulting from the absence of a political office in the Force.

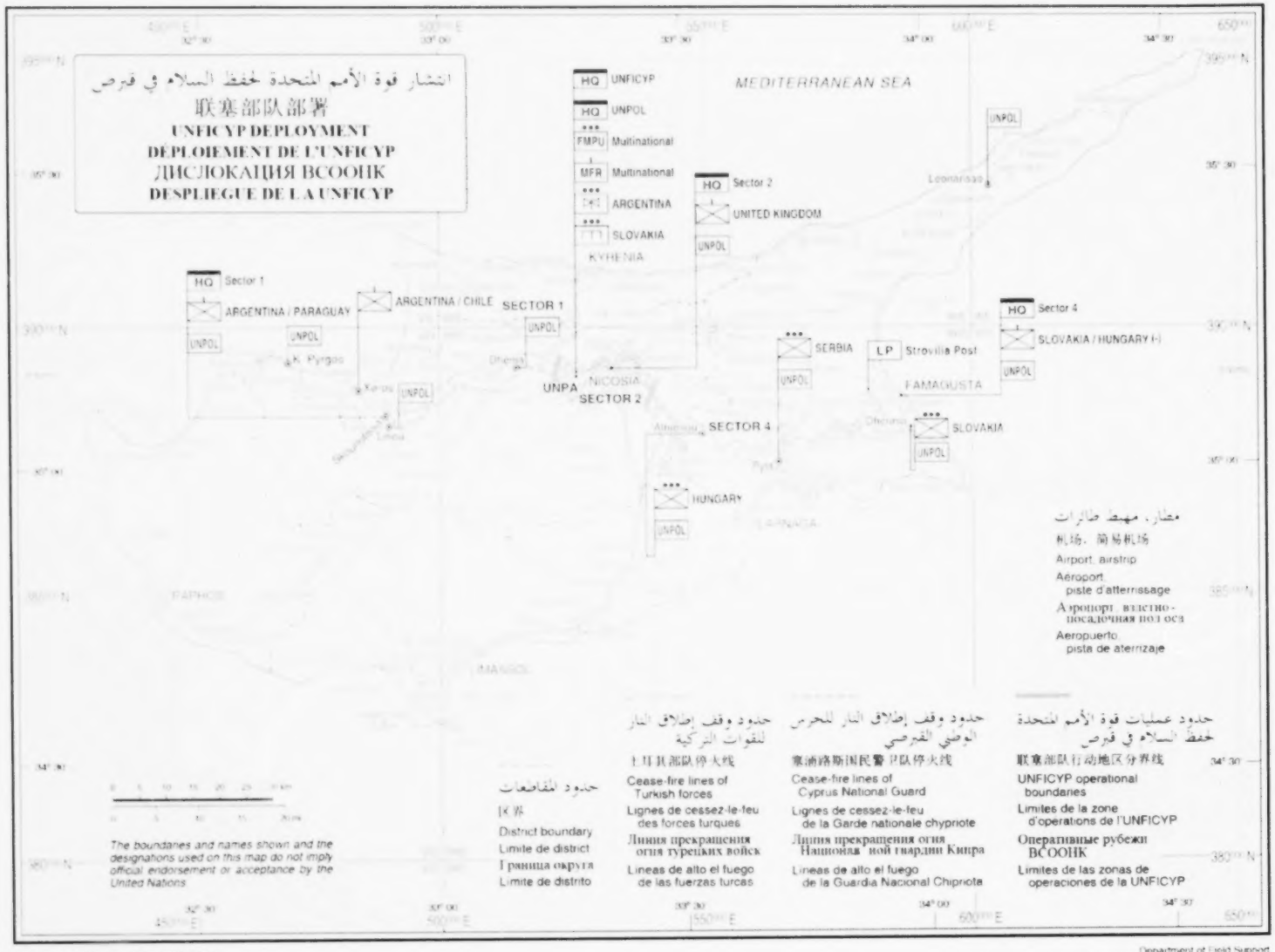
55. UNFICYP also supports some, rather modest, bicommunal activities. That is done, again, mainly by engaging with civil society actors, helping them to bring members of the two communities together. The Force's efforts to connect civil society groups from the two communities are highly appreciated by the non-governmental

organizations with which the review team interacted, including those focusing on women's issues, and are supported by the two sides. I welcome the intention of UNFICYP to expand those efforts from Nicosia into other areas, which would be aided by the transfer of international Civil Affairs Officers from Force headquarters to the sectors.

56. An expansion of the observation, liaison and engagement activities of UNFICYP requires for its success the cooperation of the two sides. In its exchanges with the authorities, the review team found that the political will for that cooperation exists on both sides, which is highly appreciated. In the long run, I hope that the two sides will come together to resolve some of their differences directly; a good example of that exists already in the Joint Communications Room, which brings police officers and experts from the two sides directly together, under UNFICYP auspices, to work on criminal matters.

57. In conclusion, I recommend maintaining the preventive and deterrence capabilities of UNFICYP, with minor reductions, while at the same time expanding its observation, liaison and engagement capabilities. UNFICYP would therefore remain, for the time being, an infantry-based peacekeeping operation, but it would have a strengthened observation and liaison component. That represents a further step in the direction already taken after the review of UNFICYP of 2004. It would make the Force more effective in maintaining calm in the buffer zone and preventing tensions from escalating, thereby helping to create conditions conducive to a resumption of settlement talks. At the same time, the efficiencies identified by the review team would, once fully implemented, allow for measurable savings in the UNFICYP budget.

58. I wish to thank Mr. Weisbrod-Weber and his review team for their findings and recommendations. I also wish to express my appreciation to the authorities on both sides of the island, the leadership and staff of UNFICYP and the United Nations headquarters staff involved for the support extended to the UNFICYP review process.



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